

Every Brand and Business Person Should Do This to Ensure Their Credibility



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Imagine you've just walked into an expensive car dealership to buy a new sports car. It's the car you've always dreamed of — expensive, sleek and fast. But walking up to greet you is an unkempt, mumbling salesman, wearing a tattered suit with a tomato-soup stain on his tie.

Whoa.

It's obviously still going to be the same great car if you buy it, but do you really want to spend your hard-earned money with this guy? Is he going to make you feel good about doing business together? Are you going to trust him and take his advice? Or, does he actually give you second thoughts about buying your dream car from him?

We've all heard the adage, "You only get one chance to make a first impression." In business, however, the first, second, third — and every impression after that — counts in a big way. And while the way you dress, and whether you can sip tomato soup without spilling it on your tie, can be important ways to measure every impression, I want to talk about the kind of impression you make when you're sloppy in written communications — things like emails, texts, reports, presentations, social media, and even marketing materials. Carelessness like this is, in its own way, a tomato-soup stain on your brand and does real damage to the credibility of you and your business.

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Quality counts

If you don't care about the quality of your work why should anyone believe you do quality work?

There are lots of excuses for this kind of sloppiness and I've heard many of them. "I'm so busy, I don't have time to double-check my work." Or, "I've got big fingers and am a bad typist." Or, "I hate doing that work so I just want to get it over with." And even, "Come on, you know what I meant to say. It doesn't really matter."

But the underlying excuse is plain and simple, "I don't care."

This "who cares" approach to written communication is a lot more common than you think. And you need to know, people judge you by it.

Recently, as a favor to a friend, I had a phone call with an entrepreneur who was starting a business and wanted to know more about branding. About 15 minutes into the call, we got disconnected. He didn't call me back so I tried calling him, but it went directly to voicemail. I texted him with no reply, leaving me no choice but to give up and wait for him to reconnect with me.

For about four hours, I heard nothing. Then, finally, I got a text from him. It was riddled with spelling errors, bad syntax, and I needed to read it three times just to decipher what he was actually trying to say.

And if that wasn't bad enough, his excuse for being disconnected was that his phone died because he'd forgotten to charge the battery. Imagine that, he had an important call with someone who was doing him a favor, someone who could help him with

something he needed help with, but he didn't bother to charge his phone. That, too, is sloppy business practice, but for another article.

We went on to exchange several emails, each of his was poorly written and peppered with punctuation errors and simple misspellings. My entire opinion of him and, frankly, his business, was that of a tomato-soup-stained tie. I felt he was being disrespectful to me — not caring about my time and the effort I needed to make to get through his mess. All of it, to me, was a reflection on him and his ability to attend to details and care about quality. From that, I determined that I would never do business with someone who cared that little about his own business. Because if he can't care enough to simply re-read an email to ensure it makes sense, how could I ever trust him to care about anything else?

Don't make excuses

There is no reason, no excuse, for any mistake in written communication. It doesn't matter if it's a printed letter to an investor or an internal text to a subordinate, sloppiness is a bad habit. I'm not saying that you need to be a slave to the *New Oxford Style Manual*, or write like Ernest Hemingway. Instead, just ensure that your writing is clear and doesn't contain any unforced errors.

The internet makes it easy to find correct answers with little effort. Spelling searches, grammar and syntax searches, simple questions about almost anything can be typed into a search bar and get you an answer in seconds. If you need more help than that, there are downloadable apps that act like an angel on your shoulder — an angel that knows how to write. Apps like Grammarly, Ginger, and others are easy to use and can pull you out of a simple mistake, or actually help improve your writing and make you look good.

Whatever you do, however, don't simply rely on your computer's spell check to do your work for you. It can be helpful, but it's not always right and all it promises is correctly spelled nonsense. And sometimes not even that.

Related: [Why All Entrepreneurs Should Write](#)

Don't let sloppiness define you

Another way to look at this kind of sloppiness is that, these days, poorly written communication has become a hallmark of scammers. I don't know about you, but when I receive a text from my bank, and the name of the bank is misspelled or there are other errors, I delete that text as quickly as possible. More and more,

people are rightly becoming wary of errors like this and lumping them together with all kinds of nefarious schemes to avoid.

Just the other day, I was on the website of a major padlock manufacturer. As I was reading I came across some misspellings that suddenly gave me pause — could a major company trying to sell me security actually be a scam? Did I get taken to a different site without knowing it? I mean, if they can't spell, and don't use proper grammar, maybe they aren't who they say they are and can't be trusted. So I left the site without buying anything.

To be credible, you must never compromise excellence. Everything makes a statement about you and the brand you represent. You can give your reputation and your brand a ratty suit, or you can give it a beautiful, hand-sewn Italian suit that actually belongs behind the wheel of that incredible sports car.

Your message is not only what you say, but how you say it

The truth is that the content of your message is not enough — it's also how you deliver it. So if you want to be heard, deliver your message the way you want it to be received.

Details matter. Do things to the highest quality, regardless of what those things may be. Take it beyond your writing and into the way you set up a room for a meeting, or the way you conduct a sales call. Everything. And yes, we're all human and we make mistakes, accidentally letting something slip past us. It happens. But don't settle for that and let carelessness become a label you wear.

You may be thinking this doesn't apply to you. You may be thinking, "I'm not perfect but I'm not about to make myself a candidate for Sigmund Freud's couch, either." Wrong. This isn't about being anal-retentive, it's about being professional. So invest a little bit of extra time to care about being perceived as a polished and credible businessperson or brand.

Related: [3 Reasons You Need to Improve Your Writing](#)

In the end, going to a little extra effort to ensure that everything you do is professional won't actually add credibility to you and your business because it's expected. It's table stakes. But not caring is a bullet that will absolutely wound

your credibility. And consistent carelessness will have you bleed out. So wear Kevlar — and for goodness' sake, avoid tomato soup.